DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 733 CE 037 742

AUTHOR Blanzy, J.
TITLE Awareness to Action.
PUB DATE Dec 83
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (Anaheim, CA, December 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; *College Planning; College Presidents; College Programs; *College Role; *Community Colleges; Continuing Education; *Economic Development; Educational Needs; Educational Planning; Educational Trends; Institutional Characteristics; Job Development; Job Training; Policy Formation; Retraining; *School Community Relationship; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Macomb Community College MI

ABSTRACT

Macomb Community College in Michigan emphasized a commitment to economic development in an effort to combat a failing economy and falling resources for college funding. The college started by forming an internal task force to determine what alternatives were available to meet existing needs, then hosted two meetings focusing on economic development for local government and business leaders. As a follow-up to these activities, workshops on economic development for local officials were conducted. In addition, the college redirected the emphasis of its continuing education department to professional development courses rather than recreational and home management courses. The college president and faculty members were involved in community networks and could take action to meet needs. For example, the college became involved in Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) activities and custom-designed training programs for industries such as Volkswagen and Hydea-matic. These contacts led to other networks of people who needed programs, could create jobs, or could provide input on job training. The last key element in the effort was Macomb's Center for Community Studies that provided survey research capabilities to the community as well as consultative services to local government and businesses. From an awareness of the problems of the community and a commitment to meeting needs on the part of the whole staff, the college has been able to take action to solve problems, to serve people, and to keep itself a viable and respected institution. (KC)

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J. Blanzy
Macomb Community College
Warren, Mich. 48093

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AWARENESS TO ACTION

Chapter 1 of Marvin Cetron's book - "Encounter with the Future: A Forecast of Life into the 21st Century" has a quote attributed to Confucius: "Only the supremely wise and abysmally ignorant do not change."

At Macomb we don't think we're supremely wise and we hope we're not abysmally ignorant. Consequently, we scan our environment, we act according to what we pick up on our scanners and we change! I would like to provide an overview of the changes and projects related to training and retraining that Macomb Community College has been involved in since 1980. In the fall/winter of 1979-1980 and early 1981, the national economy was more concerned about inflation and taxes than it was about jobs. Local surveys and studies conducted by the college's Center for Community Studies reflected the national concern, but they also indicated that the lack of jobs was becoming of paramont importance. Changing employment needs related to technological change and foreign competition was evident, adverse funding to colleges because of the state economy, media reports, and personal contacts with local and state officials made us all aware of the need.

People in business and industry, governmental units in Macomb County, as well as the college itself were in difficulty. Our resources were fully committed and we were experiencing cutbacks in revenue from the state. Could we redirect our resources in an effective manner, could we change our priorities. We saw the path in front of us, we were aware of the problems, but the option to sit it out was still there and status quo can be a tempting option.

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In 1980 we recognized that community colleges are not economic development corporations. Colleges find it acceptable and traditional to work with business and industry leaders. We do that with our occupational advisory committees because we are educational and training institutions. But commonly educational institutions feel they shouldn't work with state bureaucrats and local politicians, even though they are an integral part of economic development activities.

In a different institutional culture, it would have been acceptable to not change, to keep the status quo, to not become concerned about economic development in general and more specifically the upgrading and retraining of workers. But the culture of the college developed under the leadership of our president, Al Lorenzo,--and this was not an easy task for him by any measure--was to emphasize the college's role in the community. The college's role was defined not just as an educational institution, with a narrowly defined mission of transfer and occupational education, but rather as an institution devoted to human development both individually and collectively. We don't grow people, but we do help people grow!!

George Keller's book, Academic Strategy--The Management Revolution in American Higher Education begins one of the chapters with a quote from Will Rogers "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

The status quo--"sitting there"--at Macomb College was never really an option, the college is a very action-oriented institution. We had strong programs in occupational training, Apprentice and Employee-in-Training programs and a nationally recognized coop program. In addition, the college had been active in preparing specialized training programs through the designation of Tailored Educational Programs and Services (TEPS). Specialized

programs for such companies as Michigan Bell, Hydra-matic Division of General Motors, U.S. Tank Command and others convinced the college that we had the capability to mobilize our resources to assist in special training and retraining efforts. Consequently, the college started by forming an internal task force to determine what alternatives were available to meet the existing needs.

Activities initiated by the task force cemented our resolve to move on down the track of economic development systems. The college had been active with the local chamber of commerces and with many occupational advisory committees, but the task force sought to broaden this involvement to relate to local economic development activities. Consequently, the task force arranged for the college to host two breakfast meetings focusing on economic development and at the same time provided a forum for mobilizing local agencies by distributing the results of a county-wide survey relating to citizen concerns. One meeting was held with about 150 business/industry leaders in the county and the other with local governmental leaders. A fourth major effort, not related to the task force, involved the college's Center for Community Studies. The Center conducted a study for the Michigan Department of Education pertaining to economic development efforts by educational institutions in Southeastern Michigan.

As a follow-up to these activities, workshops on economic development for city and township officials and members of Economic Development Corporations were created. Further, the college expanded the scope of the Center for Community Studies to be responsive to local governmental, public service and business/industry needs for information related to Economic Development Activities. For example, studies were completed for the Cities of Warren and Mt. Clemens and a consumer survey was published in the Detroit Free Press.

One additional change at the college also took place at this time. The emphasis of Continuing Education was changed to stress professional development courses rather than recreational and home management activities by using an existing office and staff. This was done with a vacant professional position and by giving it a new mission and purpose. This method of growth by substitution is a key element in our strategy at the college.

There are other parties in our local networks for scanning and action that are noteworthy. The college was and is actively involved with the Macomb Area Work Education Council. This council provides linkages between local business leaders and educational leaders. Several social service agencies meet regularly and we meet with them. The college president meets with local union officials to consider matters of mutual interest and the college staff meets on a regular basis with county school superintendents and high school principals.

Because of the college's emphasis upon community and the thrust given to economic development activities by the President and the task force, these networks provided the college not only with a greater awareness of needs, but the ability to take action in a coordinated and effective manner. Let me site just a couple of examples. Our involvement in the CETA training program and our work with the MESC offices in providing assessment for TRA recipients are prime examples of working with local social service agencies in meeting a pressing local need in a coordinated manner. Our work in designing training programs for Volkswagen of America and Hydra-matic pre-apprentice training programs are due to our involvement with local and state governmental agencies who were instrumental in getting these companies located in Macomb County.

The Volkswagen Project led to another key networking framework that has allowed us to assist in the training and retraining of workers. State and

federal officials have been active leaders and partners in many of our efforts. The Michigan Department of Education has made many of these activities possible and has been supportive of the community colleges role in economic development in Michigan. The Department of Labor and the Department of Commerce have also been active in providing speakers for workshops on a local level, as well as providing both fiscal and moral support for training/retraining efforts. Congressional officies are interested in these activities. They are willing to lend support to initiate projects and to assist in bringing added resources to see them successfully completed.

There are so many efforts taking place within the college it is very difficult to track all of them, but we consider this diffusion of effort and this sense of mission as being a positive ingredient in our success. Our institution is large (30,000+ students), but it is not our size alone that allows us to establish successful training programs. Rather it is the sense of purpose and mission instilled into the college by our president and key college staff. Communicating and instilling this sense of mission into the college is a difficult challenge but one that our president and staff is clearly up to. The role of the President as principal communicator is crucial.

Let us now consider a synthesis of the key elements in how Macomb Community College has organized for the delivery of training/retraining programs and economic development activities.

First the college has used existing programs and courses. Sometimes the programs are offered in a normal scheduling pattern, other times in unique patterns or timeframes. For example most of our CETA programs were conventional occupational programs offered in traditional patterns, but with added assessment and counseling support. The robotics program completed in conjunction with the DownRiver Community Conference was similar but did have

variations in time patterns from the traditional offerings. Also in terms of existing courses and programs, each college must be aware of the relevancy of their existing programs to training/retraining needs. Robotics and CAD/CAM training are typical examples of current relevant programs, and I'm sure each college can site its own example of an existing program that would not be relevant to retraining needs.

Secondly, Macomb has provided Tailored Educational Programs and Services. Our work with General Motors, Volkswagen of America, and the NDTC in developing counseling models are prime examples of these type of activities. Currently we are completing two training projects with Venture Industries and the New Haven Foundry that fit this pattern. The college activities have included specialized language training, pre-apprentice assessment, a variety of training programs, development of conceptual models, training manual development and specialized one-on-one technical training.

The use of our Division of Continuing Education to highlight job training, economic development, and professional continuing education is our third key element in delivering training opportunities. For example, this divisions next topic in the College's Small Business Institute Seminar Series is "Money Sources for Your Business." Other examples of Community Services Activities include the "Sunrise Seminars" conducted at a large shopping mall for retailers and special programs ranging from court reporting to plastics.

The last key element is our Center for Community Studies. The Center provides survey research capabilities to the community as well as consultative services to local government and business.

Let me now try to summarize major elements of the Macomb College experience that may be valuable to you in dealing with training and retraining on a broad institutional basis.

1. Scanning (awareness) - become aware of community needs, become aware of specific business/industry needs, become familiar with economic development activities in your community. Use both formal and informal processes such as surveys, breakfast meetings, belonging to service clubs, being a part of the community, and conducting formal research.

2. Analyze the potential responses - know what you can and cannot deliver. Use your strengths as a human development institution. Don't try to be something your not. We have not tried to become a University of Michigan, but we have used our tremendous resources related to occupational education and training and our expertise in vocational counseling and job placement.

3. Develop networks - these are not only critical in scanning the environment, but are desirable in assisting in the delivery of a quality program or service.

4. Take the initiative - if you wait for others to come to you, you may miss the train. Volkswagen, Ford/UAW, New Haven Foundry and many other projects would not have happened unless we made the first contact.

5. Growth by substitution - rework job responsibilities, change organization, release people to do different things. Macomb Community College has released administrators full-time from their normal duties to complete the training projects with UAW/Ford and V.W. The college has released faculty from their teaching responsibilities for from one day to a semester to work on related programs.

6. Training and retraining must become part of your mission and it must be communicated and accepted. Your whole institution must be prepared to take action. It requires the commitment and dedication of more than a few individuals. When we work on a project, the graphics technician is as much committed as the president, faculty member or Dean. Although you will want to designate a primary contact person or persons, make it a commitment of the whole staff. Then give your staff training and marketing materials to make it happen.

7. Leadership through service and expertise - the heart and soul of the colleges role in providing leadership is found in its ability to service the community. We feel our college is not only a leader in the local community, but in the community college community as well, not because of any special position we hold but because we want to meet the needs of the local community as well as to serve the college community. When a state-wide economic development brochure for community colleges was to be developed, we used our resources to do it. When a four community college consortium proposal for economic development activities had to be developed our staff did it.

Our President belongs to a County Economic Revitalization Committee, other staff members belong to our P.I.C., small business associations, etc. We try to serve on committees, we try to share freely with our ideas and time because we identify service as being important to the college and appropriate to staff. But staff cannot serve unless they have the knowledge and skills to be able to be useful

8. Be prepared to take action - training/retraining can't wait until it meets your academic calendar, or goes through your curricular process. Know what you can deliver and be prepared to say yes or no. Don't be locked into existing organization structures or delivery systems.

Consequently, you must invest time in your staff in order that they may understand the problems and make sure they have the expertise (or know where to find it) to be able to deliver For example, at Macomb as soon as JTPA was announced we assigned three people to become experts in the legislation and to outline the impact in the Service Delivery Area and to develop a potential response the college might take with respect to local needs.

The first step is awareness, but the most important step is action.